



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

March 22, 1979

MEMORANDUM

TO: ARA/CAR - Mr. Hewitt

FROM: INR/RAR/OD - Hunter L. Estep

SUBJECT: Prospects for Stability in Smaller Islands of the Eastern Caribbean

As you requested, we have reviewed the situation in St. Lucia, Antigua, Dominica, and St. Vincent in light of the apparently successful coup in Grenada, to assess the possibility that similar developments might occur among Grenada's neighbors. We describe below the current situation in each of the islands, with particular attention to opposition movements. We also examine the Cuban strategy for the area, to the extent this may be determined. We have reached the following conclusions.

On the one hand:

- There is little or no evidence that opposition groups in the islands are sufficiently prepared or determined, nor are the conditions ripe, for a coup like that in Grenada to be attempted in the near term.
- Though it has quickly become a truism, the tradition of democratic processes is strong in the islands; opposition groups would unquestionably prefer to reach power through peaceful means, i.e., elections.
- Outside assistance to the New Jewel Movement (NJM) on the basis of available evidence consisted only of some training, encouragement, and perhaps modest funding.
- Events in Grenada have alarmed its neighbors; the coup leaders (and NJM friends abroad) seem to have been much concerned over international reaction and particularly that of the US.

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On the other hand:

- The successful coup in Grenada cannot fail to stimulate radical groups in the other islands to consider a similar attempt, particularly if a group's prospects for achieving power through peaceful methods are very poor. Outside supporters, e.g., Cuba, will also be encouraged.
- Cuba sees real opportunities in the Eastern Caribbean for developing influence at very little risk or cost. While Havana does not appear to be actively promoting leftist coups, it is pursuing programs likely to encourage such tendencies among opposition groups.
- Governments in the other islands will henceforth be more alert against potential coup plotting, gunrunning, and similar threats to stability, but their defense forces are probably incapable of putting up much resistance to well-planned attempts carried out by a well-trained and equipped force with substantial local support or acceptance.
- Once the new regime in Grenada consolidates its position, the island may become a clearinghouse of a sort among radical groups in the Eastern Caribbean.

In short, our conclusion for the near term is that the Grenada coup is not likely to be repeated in a neighboring island. The medium term is less predictable and requires more analysis as further information becomes available. Gairy's ouster was symptomatic, in many ways, of the unstable balance of forces within these tiny islands. All of them have serious economic problems, and their restricted potential for development may mean that they are not inherently viable. The islands could accordingly fall into political turmoil which might result in increasingly radical regimes, almost certainly of the left.

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ST. LUCIA

(C) St. Lucia became independent last February, under Premier John Compton's leadership. Compton had for some time pressed the British to grant independence. He claimed that his United Worker Party's (UWP) general election victory in 1974 mandated that course. It is true that the desirability of independence was part of the UWP platform, but the issue was not a crucial one during the campaign. Moreover the UWP did not score a strong victory, registering 53 per cent of the vote to the opposition St. Lucia Labour Party's (SLP) 45 per cent.

(C) The SLP, for its part, objected to the granting of independence without new general elections or a referendum. The Party was not opposed in principle to breaking the final ties with British, but did not want Compton's identification as the leader of the independence to strengthen his political position. The general elections due in 1979 are expected to be close.

[] The SLP is divided into factions, the largest of which is headed by George Odlum, the founding father of St. Lucia's radical movement. Odlum's group has called for nationalization of property, land reform, and increased control over foreign investment. The more conservative SLP faction believes the UWP government has ignored the agricultural segment of the population and emasculated the labor movement. There may be some cracks in SLP unity.

Opposition Ties with Communists and Socialists

[] Odlum is an admirer of Fidel Castro. He has often worn Cuban green fatigue uniforms and has stated that he looks upon Cuba as a model for restructuring St. Lucian society. According to a generally reliable source, Odlum is surrounded by young people who are impressed with Cuba's achievements and the apparent egalitarianism of the Cuban socialist system. Nonetheless, Odlum does not appear to be as close to Cubans or other leftists as other Eastern Caribbean leaders.

[] The major opposition links with Cuba and radical insurgents elsewhere appear to be through the Workers Revolutionary Movement (WRM) [] sources point toward a limited WRM role in the near term, with the potential for exerting stronger influence.

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--In 1978, the WRM probably had less than 12 members, but its ranks may have since increased.

--One of the WRM's members, Earl Bosquet, was active in the preparations for the Havana Youth Festival held last July.

--The WRM recently formed a St. Lucian/Cuban Friendship Society and opened a cultural exposition.

--The WRM planned to send a representative to last December's Communist Jamaica Worker Party's conference in order to discuss closer cooperation and united front activities with the various Marxist parties and movements in the English-speaking Caribbean.

ANTIGUA

(C) Antiguan Premier Vere Bird has recently pressed for Antigua's independence, which should follow St. Vincent's. His Antigua Labour Party (ALP) has generally favored severing the remaining British ties, but Bird had not pushed the issue until last year.

(C) The ALP has no specific ideological character but reportedly draws its support from the middle class. In the 1976 general elections, the ALP received 10 seats of the 17 seats in the legislature.

(C) The major opposition party, the Progressive Labour Movement (PLM) also seems to be a party of personalities, rather than issues. In contrast to the ALP, it draws its support from labor unions and the large numbers of unemployed on the island.

(LOU) In February, the PLM suffered a setback when its leader, former Premier George Walter, was convicted on charges of corruption and fraud while in office. The prosecution was instigated by the Bird government, and the investigation which led to Walter's conviction has contributed to a rather severe political polarization on the island... The timing of Walter's prosecution may well have been inspired by the Bird government's embarrassment over Bird ties to Space Research Corporation, a Canadian company which allegedly ships arms to South Africa through Antigua.

[] In the context of Antigua's current internal tensions the Afri-Caribbean Movement (ACLM) Antigua's leading leftist organization, may make some headway. According to a []

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--ACLM leader Leonard Timothy Hector stated that both major parties had been adversely affected by political scandals, and as a result, an opportunity existed to fill the political vacuum.

--Hector was not yet certain whether a move to fill the void should be under the ACLM's sponsorship or if a new political party would emerge with himself and other ACLM members in leadership roles.

(C) The ACLM's major appeal is to Antiguan youth. Hector is the ACLM founding father and is avowedly pro-communist. He is also reported to be a racist and a Black Power advocate.

ACLM Ties with Cuba and other Leftists

(C) Apparently there are links between the ACLM and other regional leftist groups, such as Grenada's New Jewel Movement. In 1977 Hector and another ACLM member visited Cuba, with the stated purpose of discussing "Puerto Rico's struggle for independence and the movement for independence among the smaller islands in the Caribbean". The ACLM visitors also planned to urge the Cubans to extend assistance to freedom fighters in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) and South Africa.

ST. VINCENT

(C) St. Vincent may be the next island in the Eastern Caribbean to become independent. Should it do so this year, Premier R. Milton Cato is expected to reap benefits in the general elections slated for late 1979. As the only well-organized party on the island, Cato's St. Vincent Labour Party (SLVP) is expected to win resoundingly, even if independence is not achieved this year. In 1974, the SLVP gained 10 legislative seats to the opposition's three.

[] Of the many small political groups in St. Vincent, the YOULOU United Liberation Movement (YULIMO) probably poses the greatest challenge to the SLVP. According to a generally reliable source, YULIMO has a membership of 1000, primarily among St. Vincent youth. Its Marxist leader, Dr. Ralph Gonsalves is a lecturer at the University of the West Indies in Barbados. He and a core of other YULIMO leaders have gained considerable regional media attention for the YULIMO movement.

[] Apparently YULIMO's strength and activities have increased in the past year. According to []

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[REDACTED]

(LOU) Attempting to inject itself into the independence picture, YULIMO circulated several constitutional proposals last year. They called for an independent St. Vincent, guaranteed human rights, and government acquisition of properties with compensation. Gonsalves pointed out that these proposals were not in themselves "socialist". However, YULIMO's stated intention is to build a "scientific socialist state".

YULIMO's Communist and Socialist Ties

(S/NF) Ralph Gonsalves has travelled to Cuba and Guyana. At one time he organized university students to distribute English language communist materials which originated in Guyana. According to a generally reliable source, one of the reasons Gonsalves was chosen YULIMO leader was his direct contact with "international socialists".

2 [REDACTED] Other YULIMO members have no doubt also
2 communicated with Cubans and leftist sympathizers. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] report: 25X6

--Grenada's New Jewel Movement sent delegates to the YULIMO congress in August 1977.

--Renwick Rose, a prominent YULIMO member, visited the secretary general of the communist party in Guadeloupe (CPG) for private discussions in November 1978.

2 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] sources corroborate YULIMO-
Cuban ties.

--In mid-October 1977, [REDACTED] 25X1
YULIMO, said that Cuba was providing funds and guidance to pro-Cuban political parties in the Caribbean.

--[REDACTED] indicated in mid-1978 that Cuba had issued a set of instructions to YULIMO to be used in preparation for St. Vincent's elections.

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--One of YULIMO's members in 1978 reportedly claimed that Cuban financial assistance is not given directly to YULIMO, but rather is channeled through the YULIMO-Cuban Friendship Society.

25 DOMINICA

—(C) Premier Patrick John led Dominica to independence last November. He has been the island's chief executive since the 1975 general elections when his Dominica Labor Party (DLP) won 16 of 21 seats in the legislature. The general election campaign was personality oriented, with little substantive content.

—(C) John opportunistically mixes rhetoric -- leftist and anti-leftist -- to achieve his purposes. The main evidence of his ideological persuasion was the DLP's expressed admiration for Forbes Burnham's Guyana. John sought and received Guyanese advice on establishing a "cooperative society".

—(C) The principal opposition party, the Dominican Freedom Party (DFP) appears to be more moderate than the DLP, but its precise ideology is also vague. Eugenia Charles, DLP leader, is strongly opposed to the Guyanese model. The DFP has not yet been able to challenge John's rule effectively.

2 [] Perhaps the most imminent threat to the government comes from the Douglas brothers. Michael Douglas is a former cabinet member. His brother Roosevelt is a radical, and advocates the Cuban model for Dominica. The brothers are attempting to organize an alliance of opposition forces and consolidate their political base. It is difficult to estimate their strength at this time. They probably would prefer to come to power by legitimate means rather than by force.

2 [] John apparently communicates with both men and has been fairly adroit in fending off their challenges. Last year, the Douglases attempted to discredit John by drawing public attention to the severely limited composition of the country's electoral commission. John outmaneuvered them, however, by amending the constitution before they could make the commission an opposition issue.

— Roosevelt-Douglas' Ties with Cubans and Leftists

[] "Rosie" Douglas is one of the leading radicals in the Caribbean, and he has ties with others of similar persuasion throughout the region. For example, [] reported that Douglas invited delegates from the communist parties

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to Martinique and Guadeloupe to attend Dominican independence celebrations last year. During their visit, Douglas held numerous discussions with them.

[] There is little doubt that Roosevelt Douglas has had numerous contacts with Cubans over the years. According to []

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--Douglas claimed in 1976 that Cuba considered Dominica's geographical position important and would be prepared to give substantial aid to Dominica.

--In 1978 Douglas expressed in private his disappointment over the Dominican government's lack of interest in several Cuban aid projects which he had negotiated.

--During that same conversation, Douglas stated he was organizing Dominican participation in the Havana World Youth Festival.

Cuban Strategy

[] Cuba has found the English-speaking Caribbean mini-states to be relatively fertile soil for attempts to establish rapport and political influence, in contrast to the Spanish-speaking countries of the region. Cuba has represented its economic and political system as a successful response to the same economic and social problems faced by other Caribbean countries. It has encouraged visits by politicians, students, labor leaders, cultural figures, and even businessmen, many if not most of whom have returned from Cuba favorably impressed. The unique ingredients of Cuban "success" -- not only massive Soviet assistance, but also a relatively advanced pre-revolutionary infrastructure and cultural level as well as the advantage of scale -- are often perceived only dimly or not at all by Cuba's admiring Caribbean visitors.

[] In Cuban eyes, the "democratic tradition" of the Anglophone states is probably seen, somewhat paradoxically, as advantageous to Cuban objectives. Unlike much of Spanish America, there is no strong, well-entrenched local oligarchy which has for generations sustained a conservative, authoritarian political system. The British socialist tradition also causes Anglophone West Indian political leaders to regard Cuba's radically egalitarian system with less suspicion, and Havana places great emphasis on its claim to have eradicated racism from Cuba. Moreover, the Cubans may well question the depth of West Indian commitment to British-style parliamentary democracy; their experience with Michael Manley and Forbes Burnham probably has given them grounds for doubt.

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1 [] In general, Havana sees little risk and considerable potential gain in supporting leftist Caribbean political leaders and movements with modest amounts of financial assistance, propaganda support, or even political/military training. The expenditure of relatively small sums goes a long way in the very limited political environments of the West Indies, and the establishment of "Friendship Societies" helps build a favorable political base among the young, relatively well-educated, and politically active population. The conspicuously cordial relationship established with Manley has helped legitimize Cuban activities elsewhere in the English-speaking Caribbean. In particular, ties with the more radical wing of the Jamaican PNP appear to have given Cuba a willing ally and useful liaison in dealing with opposition groups in the Eastern Caribbean.

[] There is little evidence that Cuba is actively promoting violent political change in the Eastern Caribbean. However, given Cuba's political ideology, the ties being established with opposition groups are likely to encourage such tendencies. While Havana does not wish to be seen by regional governments as a dangerous destabilizing influence in the Caribbean, Cuba probably is prepared to provide discreet, indirect military assistance if requested by groups which it regards as viable, as long as "plausible deniability" can be maintained.

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ANNEX

Defense Forces

ST. LUCIA

(C) Local security forces: 417 member Royal St. Lucia Force; 50 St. Lucia Auxiliary Constabulary; 1 port security boat (police).

ANTIGUA

(C) Local security forces: Antigua Self-Defense Force (a reserve force of 42 part-time soldiers; at present, it has only one officer assigned to it but plans call for six officers and 100 men); Royal Antigua Police Force, 325 (authorized strength 340).

(S) The UK is responsible for external defense; contingencies will be met by deploying ships from the Eastern Atlantic; in addition, the British Armed Forces maintain a company of Caribbean-trained Royal Marine Commandos in the UK prepared for immediate airlift to the Caribbean.

ST. VINCENT

(C) Local security forces: 356 member Royal St. Vincent Police Force; 105 member St. Vincent Auxiliary Police Force; 1 port security boat (police).

(S) The UK is responsible for external defense; contingencies will be met by deploying ships from the Eastern Atlantic; in addition, the British Armed Forces maintain a company of Royal Marine Commandos trained in the Caribbean in the UK for immediate airlift to the Caribbean.

DOMINICA

(C) Local security force: Royal Dominica Defense Force, 120 members (force is a reserve unit); Royal Dominica Police Force, 215 members; Rural Constabulary, 100 members.

NOTE: The text of the communique from the March 20 meeting of the West Indies Associated States includes a proposal to "establish immediately a regional security force."

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